



**NEWS MEDIA CONTACTS:**

**Joe Davis, 202/586-4940**

**Chris Kielich, 202/586-5806**

**Karen Lutz, 303-966-4546**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Energy Department to Begin Demolition of Rocky Flats Building 771, the “Most Dangerous Building in America”**

**WASHINGTON, DC** – U.S. Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham announced today that on Thursday, July 15, the Department of Energy (DOE) will begin demolishing “the most dangerous building in America,” Building 771 at DOE’s Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site, a former nuclear weapons production plant located near Denver, Colo.

The demolition of Building 771 is a major milestone and success for the nation’s accelerated nuclear cleanup program. The plutonium process building has a 50-year legacy of plutonium leaks and spills, and a major fire occurred there in 1957. In 1994, the Department of Energy concluded that Building 771 was its greatest vulnerability because of the hazardous and radioactive materials it once housed. It was also dubbed by the national media as “the most dangerous building in America.” Building 771 is the first plutonium process building of its size and complexity to be demolished in the United States.

“This represents a historic milestone in closing Rocky Flats and the most significant cleanup accomplishment to date in the DOE complex,” said Secretary Abraham. “The demolition of one the most contaminated buildings in the country, once thought impossible, demonstrates the nation’s commitment to accelerated cleanup and closure of Rocky Flats. When this historic cleanup is complete, it will show that the U.S. government can clean up the legacy of the Cold War and turn the 6,000-plus acre reserve from a perceived public liability into a true public asset, a National Wildlife Refuge managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.”

The safe cleanup and closure of an entire former nuclear weapons production site has been a task of such magnitude and complexity that it has never before been attempted, or accomplished, anywhere else in the world.

The demolition of Building 771 is the culmination of a comprehensive nine year cleanup process that included safely draining and stabilizing 15,000 liters of plutonium solutions; and removing 240 contaminated gloveboxes, 251 tanks, more than 11 miles of aging piping, and 40,000 liters of contaminated sludges.

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“Under the Energy Department’s accelerated cleanup plan, all the weapons-usable material at Rocky Flats is gone – 12 years ahead of the original schedule,” said Secretary Abraham. “And as a bonus, the cleanup will be under budget at a cost of \$7 billion – a savings to the taxpayers of \$29 billion. The nation owes its thanks to the people who have done and will continue to do the hard and complex work of the cleanup: the 4,000 Rocky Flats employees who took the agreements hammered out by elected officials, by regulators and by other vitally interested stakeholders, and successfully undertook the largest and most complex cleanup project ever before attempted anywhere in the world.”

Rocky Flats is officially no longer a nuclear weapons site. Cleanup of Rocky Flats was expected to take 65 years and cost in excess of \$36 billion. Through innovative project reforms, Rocky Flats will now be cleaned up and closed in 2006.

One of four original manufacturing buildings at Rocky Flats, dismantlement of Building 771 is expected to take six to eight weeks, completing demolition in September, 2004.

The demolition of Building 771 is the second of the site’s five major plutonium-contaminated facilities to be demolished and the beginning of a period of numerous demolition activities that will occur over the next 18 months. The remaining 450 facilities and structures at Rocky Flats will be decommissioned and demolished and environmental remediation completed, keeping Rocky Flats on schedule to safely close in 2006.

Rocky Flats is a DOE-owned cleanup and closure site operated by Kaiser-Hill Company under an accelerated closure contract. The Rocky Flats mission includes the now-completed special nuclear material management and shipment, nuclear deactivation and decommissioning, waste management and shipment, environmental cleanup and site closure.

**NOTE:** To access the Rocky Flats media advisory, please visit  
**<http://www.rfets.gov/doe/newrelease/nr04-010.pdf>**

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